

The Parish Church of St Bartholomew, Stamford Hill

A Short History, 1904–2004



Compiled by Eona Bell.

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Photographs at the end of chapters are of stained glass
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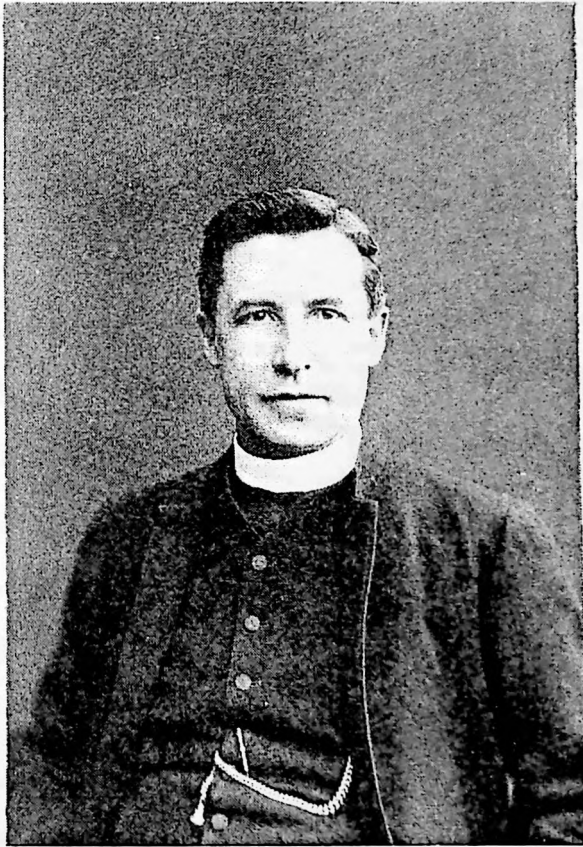
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How Our Parish Began

The St Alban's Mission, Stamford Hill, 1897–1903

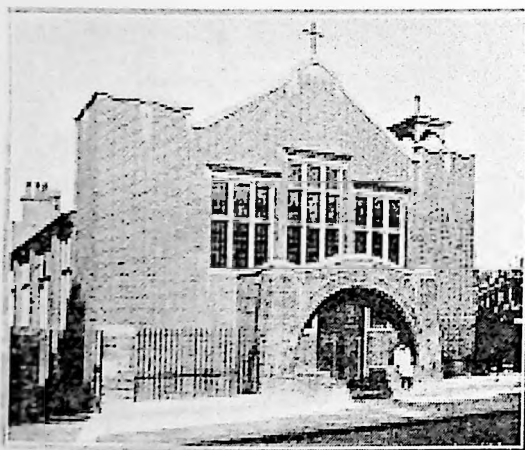
In May 1897, the Bishop of London sent the Rev'd J. W. Goddard to start a mission church as part of the London Diocesan Home Mission. A site was selected in the parish of St Ann's, South Tottenham, to the east of the Great Eastern Railway, and St Alban, the first British Martyr, was chosen to be the Patron Saint of the Mission.



The Rev'd J. W. Goddard, first Vicar of St Bartholomew's.

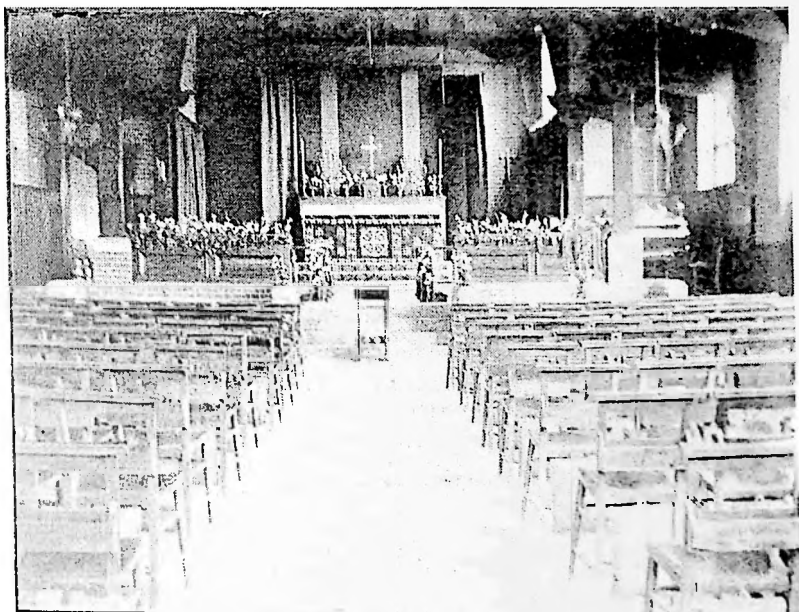
As there was little money to begin with, the mission church began meeting in rented accommodation. The only place available for hire on a Sunday was Glendale Hall, at the High Road end of St Ann's Road. Glendale Hall was used for dancing and concerts during the week. The hall was opened for public worship for the first time on Sunday 20 June 1897. It was said that the hall was often full on Sunday evenings, despite the fact that in windy weather it was full of smoke, in rainy weather dirty water dropped from the glass roof, and in sunny weather the congregation was nearly roasted! A band of helpers went early every Sunday morning to sweep, dust and clear the hall of cigarette ends, drape the platform and fix up a table with a cross, candlesticks and flowers, to make it as worthy as possible to serve as an altar for the Sunday services.

On 27 November 1897, a social gathering of worshippers was held in Glendale Hall and two churchwardens were appointed, Dr Muskett and Mr J. Wood. At the same time sidesmen and a representative Church Council were elected, and the Mission was put on a constitutional basis.



St Alban's Mission Building, Stonebridge Road.

Towards the end of the following year a site in Stonebridge Road, just off Seven Sisters Road, was secured for the creation of more permanent Mission buildings. This site was conveyed to the Bishop of London's Fund in April 1899, and at Ascensiontide the Choir and a large number of the Glendale Hall Mission congregation met at the site to take part in a Service of Thanksgiving. The laying of the memorial stone took place on St Alban's Day, 17 June 1899.



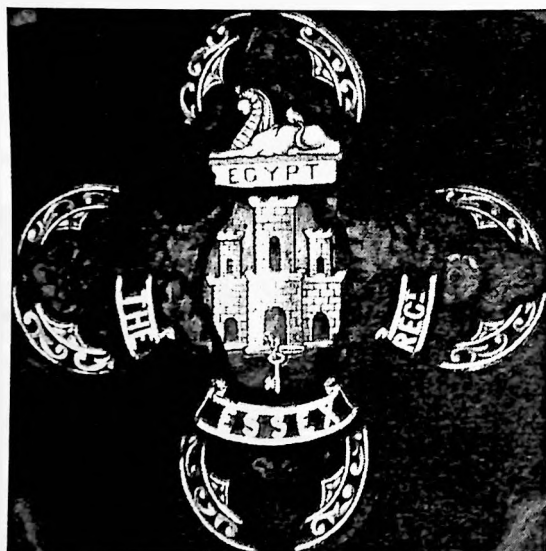
The interior of the St Alban's Mission Building.

The Bishop of Islington, the Clergy of the Rural Deanery and clerical guests formed a procession to the site of the Mission Buildings, together with the united Choirs of St John's, Vartry Road, St Peter's, Page Green, St Mary's, Tottenham, St Peter's, Edmonton and St Alban's itself. It was said that the choir of St Alban's was one of the best in the Deanery. They were led by a new processional cross, the gift of the People's Warden. It was an

impressive occasion—the Bishop, Clergy and Choirs, fully robed, filled the length of Ipplepen Road.

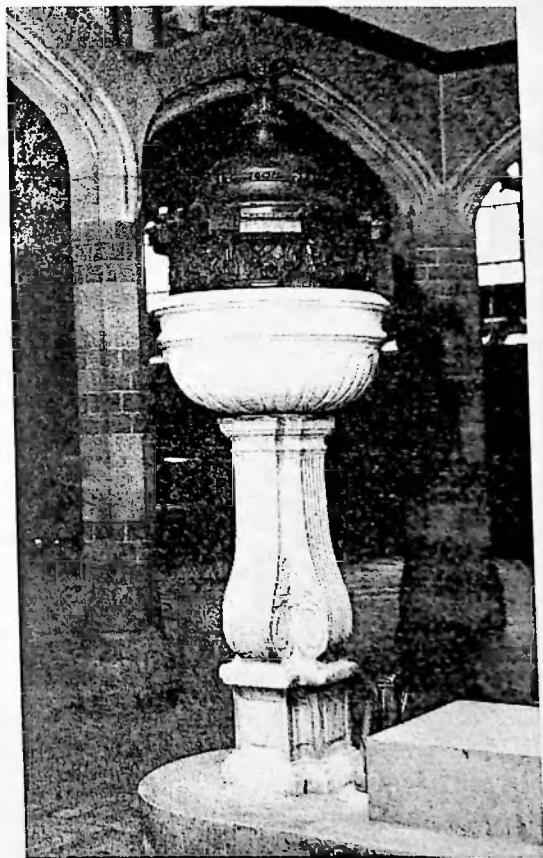
Work on St Alban's Mission Building continued throughout the summer of 1899 until the great Bishop Creighton came on All Saints' Day, 1 November 1899, and dedicated what he himself described as the most beautiful Mission Church in his Diocese.

In May, 1901, the Rev'd L. R. Moore came to work at St Alban's as Assistant Missioner and worked with untiring energy in visiting and working among the men and boys.



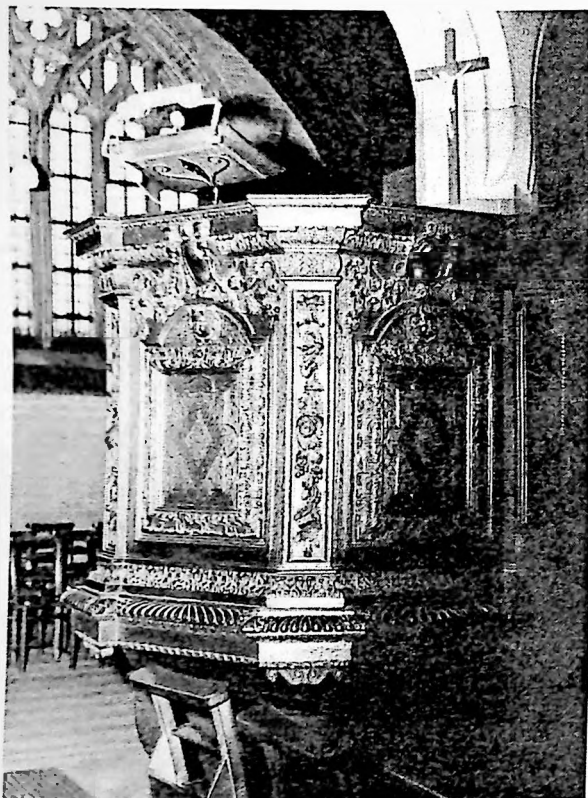
The Original St Bartholomew's Church

The original St Bartholomew's Church stood in Bartholomew Lane by the Bank of England in the City of London. It was known as St Bartholomew by the Royal Exchange. It was built around 1438 on the site of an even older church belonging to the Abbot and Convent of St Mary Graves, a Cistercian Abbey near the Tower of London which was founded by Edward III in 1349.



The font, with font cover attributed to Grinling Gibbons.

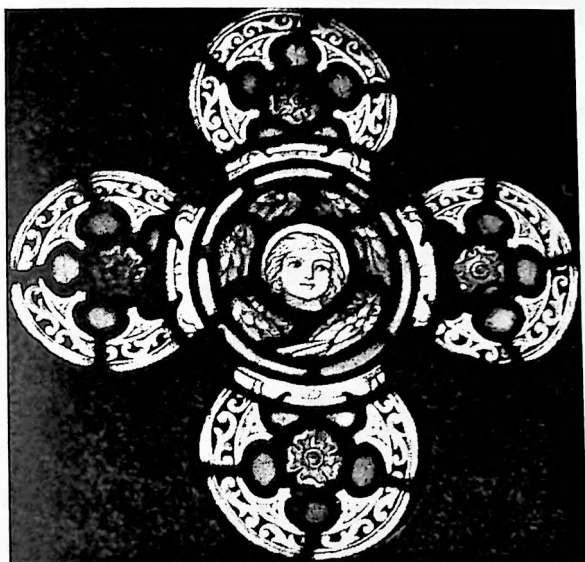
The church was burnt in the Great Fire in 1666 and rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren in 1679. In 1841 that church was pulled down and re-erected in Moor Lane, where it was consecrated in 1850. The Moor Lane church was paid for by the sale of the old church, and many of the original fittings were incorporated into the new building. A new parish was formed, and the church stood until 1902.

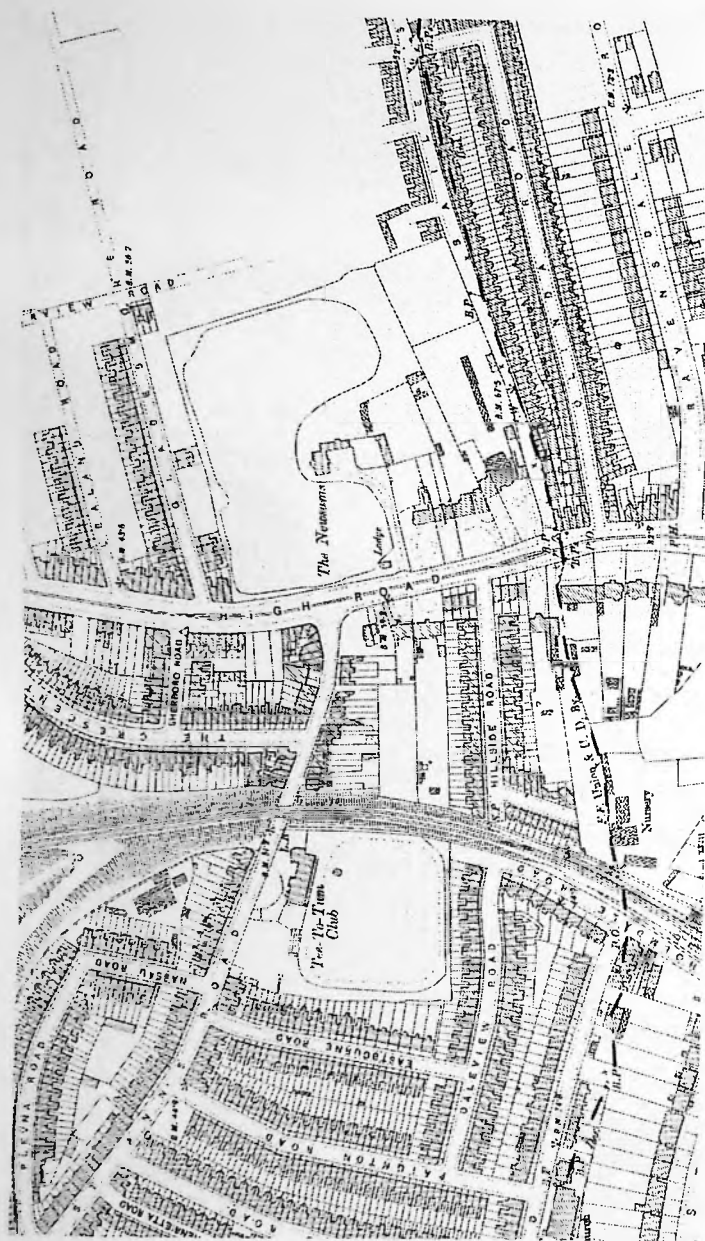


The pulpit, transferred from St Bartholomew's, Moor Lane.

The population of the City was decreasing, and the Vestry of St Giles asked the Bishop of London to consider uniting the two parishes of St Bartholomew and St Giles. On 21 January 1902, the Moor Lane site was put up for auction and many of the contents

of St Bartholomew's Church were taken to St Giles. However, the font cover and the pulpit were transferred to the new St Bartholomew's, Stamford Hill. The font cover is said to have been carved by Grinling Gibbons (1648–1721), and it was from this pulpit that the Rev'd John Keble, the great Oxford Divine, preached his last sermon.





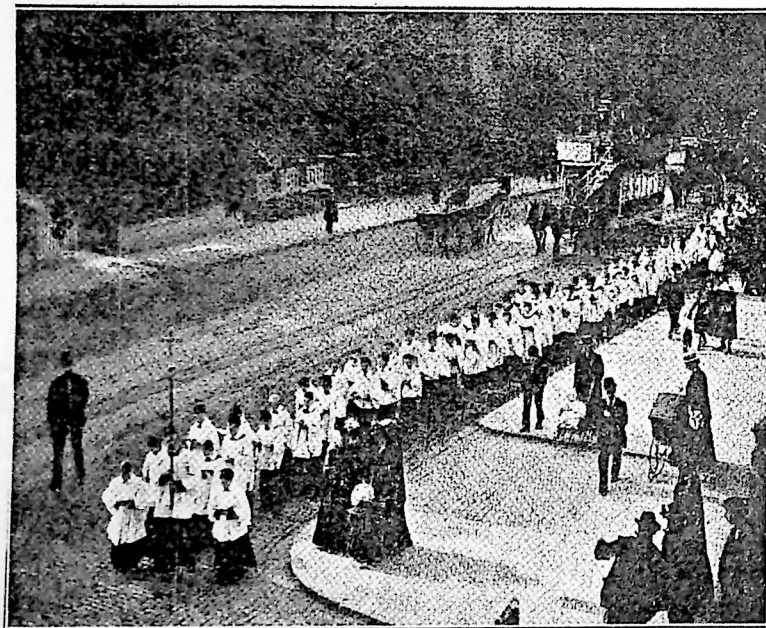
Map of the area, 1894. Glendale Hall was at 8 St Ann's Road, the fourth building from the High Road end, on the north side. The site of the future St Bartholomew's Church is still in open fields, with a large house called The Newsams to the north.



Map of the area, 1913. The Church and Vicarage are now clearly marked on the street previously known as Bailey's Lane, now Craven Park Road. The land to the north of the church has been built over with terraced houses, now forming part of the new parish.

The New Parish of St Bartholomew, Stamford Hill

In 1903, the sale of St Bartholomew's Church, Moor Lane made it possible to build a permanent Parish Church and Vicarage in Stamford Hill. The Vicar and congregation were to move from St Alban's Mission Church to the new St Bartholomew's, although the church continued to use the St Alban's Hall until it was sold in the 1970s. The Mission Hall was subsequently demolished to make way for the new housing development in Stonebridge Road.



The procession to the site of the new church, 1903.

The only site available for purchase nearby was part of an orchard belonging to a house in Bailey's Lane (the name of the road was changed soon afterwards to Craven Park Road).

On 16 April 1903, at 7 o'clock in the morning, the priest and people took up their spades and dug the first sods of the new Parish Church.



The cutting of the first sod.

Ascension Day in 1903, the 21st of May, was a glorious sunny morning. The Countess Grosvenor was pleased to visit the site of the old orchard, to lay the Memorial Stone of St Bartholomew's Parish Church. The Memorial Stone was carved by the great Eric Gill, then a young letter-cutter employed by the architect William Caröe.

The Choirs and Clergy of the district robed in Glendale Hall and proceeded to the site up the High Road. After eighteen months of building work, on All Saints' Day, Tuesday 1 November 1904, the Bishop of London consecrated the new Parish Church and on the following morning the Bishop celebrated the Holy Eucharist at a Choral Service at 7 o'clock in the morning, afterwards dedicating the Vicarage.

A history of the church published in 1968 includes a vivid description of that day:

No words could express the joy of all who had been working and waiting for so long for their Parish Church. A more beautiful

Consecration Service and a more beautiful Church would take some finding.



The order of service for the consecration of St Bartholomew's Church.

Peace be to this House from God our Heavenly Father,
Peace be to this House from His Son who is our Peace,
Peace be to this House from the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

The first hymn to be sung was Blessed City, Heavenly Salem, and many will no doubt have recalled the prayer so devoutly prayed:

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who art the beginning and the ending of all things, the first and the last, Who has the key to the House of

David, Who openest and no man shutteth, Who shuttest and no man openeth, give Thy Power, we pray Thee, to us Thy Servants, and grant that this House now opened for Thy Service, may ever be filled with Thy Presence and may ever remain a refuge for Thy faithful children, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest One God, for ever and ever, Amen.

How the building then rang with the strains of the hymns, *Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire, Jerusalem the Golden, Ten thousand times ten thousand, and For all the Saints who from their labours rest*, and how many times since have they echoed in those walls!

The *Weekly Herald* for Friday, 4 November 1904 gives the following account of the Consecration of St Bartholomew's:

The handsome new Church of St Bartholomew's, Bailey's Lane, Stamford Hill, which will now supplant for purposes of divine worship, the more modest Mission buildings in Stonebridge Road, was consecrated on Tuesday night by the Bishop of London, in the presence of a crowded congregation. The Order of Service and ceremonies was that which is usually observed on those occasions. The Clergy and Choir having robed in the underground Chapel which is below the Chancel, a procession was formed, and a circuit of the building was made, the Bishop wearing mitre and cope, and preceded by his Chaplain bearing the pastoral staff, following in the rear until the West entrance was reached, where in pursuance of the customary formalities, he knocked three times upon the doors. After a pause these were thrown open, and during the chanting of a psalm the procession walked slowly along the central aisle to the chancel.

A large number of Clergy were present, including the Rev'd Prebendary E. Hobson, the Rev'd Prebendary Blomfield Jackson, the Rev'd J. W. Goddard (Vicar Designate) and the Rev'd L. R. Moore (Assistant Curate).

In the course of the service the Bishop proceeded to the font and then to the chancel steps, lectern, pulpit, clergy stalls, choir seats and communion table, before each of which a verse of a hymn was sung, a verse from the Scriptures was recited, and an appropriate prayer was said. Finally, the sentence of consecration was read by the Registrar, and the document was ordered to be preserved in the muniments of the Registry of the Diocese.

In announcing the service and special preachers during the Octave, the Rev'd J. W. Goddard said that £1000 was required to complete the scheme under which the new Church and Vicarage were erected.

The Bishop preached a sermon from the text 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ' (Philippians 1: 6). He contrasted the religion of St Paul with that of the present day. The first thing that struck him about the Apostle was his marvellous thanksgiving, then what a hopeful man he was and how independent of public opinion. He believed in the permanence and progressiveness of the Christian character. Looking around the Church in the world today, the Bishop thought he was right in saying that people often failed in that first characteristic of thankfulness. If there ought to be a thankful people gathered in any Church, that night it should be the congregation of St Bartholomew's, Stamford Hill. Here was the result of the beginning of a work in a little dancing saloon, and he knew how they had struggled to obtain a site for the permanent Church. There was no place in the whole Diocese where it was more difficult to obtain the necessary land, but when they were beginning to be disheartened he was able to decide for them, and it was a happy day for him when he was in the position to apportion £10,000 to that district for the Church and Vicarage.

The people of St Bartholomew's ought to be grateful to God who had given them that Church at comparatively little trouble to themselves. He found very often a spirit of hopelessness, so different to St Paul's. People sometimes lacked hope in the Church of England and its prospects. They listened to what was said in the papers and did not realise what a solid phalanx of members there was in the Church. They were disheartened because a few articles were written about the faith by sceptics. When had there not been doubters in the world? He also found the tyranny of public opinion: it was easy if everybody in the street came to Church, but it was not so easy when only one man in the street attended. He wanted to see them brave and independent, not caring if they were the only ones to walk up the street. Then

again, instead of the unselfish spirit of St Paul, he saw worldliness, even among the clergy, and jealousy, even among Church members, because one was more popular or more successful than another. St Paul had a living belief in a personal God at work in him and in the world. He believed with all his heart in the forgiveness of sins. He knew nothing about the modern contrast between Evangelical truth and Church principles. They did not find in St Paul's mind any contradiction between the two things. Again, he held the belief that there was after death a life of peace, happiness and growth. Unless they began by believing in a living, personal God there would be no spring about their religion, or happiness in coming to Church. He asked them to pray for a greater grip of those realities—the personal presence of God, the forgiveness of sins, the grace in answer to prayer, and the closeness of the other world.

The service ended with the Blessing pronounced by the Bishop, and subsequently His Lordship shook hands with those members of the congregation who attended the services when the Mission was started at Glendale Hall, and who had been requested to remain behind. The musical portion of the service was well rendered by an augmented Choir.

Early in 1905, the Mission District was formed into a Parish by an Order in Council, and the Rev'd J. W. Goddard, the Mission Priest, was appointed Vicar by the Crown. In July that year the Vicar married the second daughter of the Rev'd W. Wynne-Lloyd, Rector of Bromesbarrow, and brought her home to the new Vicarage.

The Building and its Architect

P. W. Crawford, BArch, MPhil, RIBA, AABC,
Carøe & Partners

The Church of St Bartholomew is undoubtedly a building whose design is of the twentieth century, constructed at the height of the Edwardian period. Nonetheless, the development of its design clearly has its roots in the massive outpouring of ecclesiastical Victorian architecture. Throughout most of the nineteenth century the design of ecclesiastical buildings in England, strongly influenced by the Ecclesiological Society, advocated the Gothic style for church design. Whereas there were variations on this Gothic theme, ranging from decorated Early English to very occasional perpendicular, this stylistic prejudice continued through to almost the end of the nineteenth century. In the last decade, however, architects such as J. D. Sedding and Ewan Christian among others undertook departures from this design tradition.

In the early years of the twentieth century, this variety continued in the churches built for the newly emerging Edwardian suburbs. In these areas there was a need to provide good quality but relatively inexpensive churches to suit the new congregations and their developing aspirations. This meant buildings with practical comforts including reasonable lighting and heating, good acoustics and, just as important, easy maintenance. The design of St Bartholomew's by its architect W. D. Carøe is a splendid example of how the Gothic tradition was developed by an Arts-and-Crafts architect who, as Nikolaus Pevsner has stated, 'developed a homely version of the basilican Church using a free perpendicular gothic detail'.

W. D. Carøe, architect

So who was W. D. Carøe, architect of St Bartholomew's? In 1985 I was fortunate to be able to spend time with W. D. Carøe's son Alban Carøe, then in his eighties, who at the time was compiling

information about his father. This knowledge was generously shared with the writer Jennifer Freeman, who has written an excellent book on Carøe.

In September 1985, Alban Carøe gave an illuminating lecture on the life and work of his father. William Douglas Carøe was born in 1857 in Liverpool. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took a degree in mathematics, rowing with distinction but, as his son stated, 'setting his heart on architecture, travelling and the study of Gothic and Renaissance buildings'.

After leaving university he became articled to a Liverpool architect, E. B. Kirby, but in 1882 was taken into the office of the noted Victorian architect J. L. Pearson, architect of Truro Cathedral and St Augustine's, Kilburn. Within a year of Carøe joining Pearson's office, he started commissions of his own, working on into the small hours and right through most weekends. He opened an evening office in Bayswater with six assistants, starting work at a quarter to seven on five evenings a week, and always working late. W. D. Carøe became so successful and busy that Pearson reluctantly agreed to him reducing his hours in his office. W. D. Carøe's prodigious capacity for hard work did not diminish with age. In his lecture, Alban Carøe stated that his mother often told him that on their wedding day in 1891, as they left Paddington Station to start their honeymoon, his father was leaning out of the window as the train drew out of the platform shouting instructions to his secretary.

From the very beginning of W. D. Carøe's career much of his time was spent designing churches. However, his work also included residential and commercial buildings. His son stated that he had 674 cards of his father's designs in his personal index relating to buildings spread over England and Wales as well as Ireland, Scandinavia, North America and Europe. Of these, 537 related to ecclesiastical buildings and 137 to secular.

The work of W. D. Carøe needs to be set in the context of his time, especially as his work spanned from the late Victorian period into the 1920s and 30s. He was influenced not only by Pearson, for whom he worked, but also other notable architects of the

second half of the nineteenth century, including Norman Shaw, J. D. Sedding and his partner, Henry Wilson.

Carøe had a large and very successful practice. As Freeman states in her biography, 'Carøe considered that his was a profession for the satisfaction of his clients as well as himself'. He had a business-like approach which enabled him to combine an office workload involving many seemingly uneconomical details with standardised craft-work into a thriving practice that prospered throughout his life and continues to this day. In Carøe's private practice, the major activities undertaken by the firm included, as well as new churches, the conservation of historic buildings, primarily churches and cathedrals, secular buildings including universities, schools, domestic houses and vicarages, including that here at St Bartholomew's. Their work also included church fittings such as organ cases, rood screens, reredos and choir stalls, as well as other designs such as monuments, embroidery and silverware. The scope of Carøe's office was considerable, so much so that at the turn of the twentieth century he had one of the largest architectural practices in England. He was the Church Commissioners' Architect, a position that took him throughout England and Wales advising Parishes as well as the Church Commissioners. Indeed, their headquarters at 1 Millbank is to the design of W. D. Carøe.

The building of St Bartholomew's, Stamford Hill

By the time Carøe came to design St Bartholomew's in 1904, he was at the height of his career. St Bartholomew's is one of a number of churches built by Carøe between 1902 and 1908 in the emerging London suburbs. All have a similarity in style but each is unique in the particular way Carøe adapted to the condition of the site as well as the finance which was available for each of these churches. In her book on Carøe, Freeman describes St Bartholomew's as the 'full flavour of an Edwardian Church', while Pevsner describes it as 'a low, homely building of red brick sitting alongside the road'. Pevsner goes on to say that 'it is full of the

inventive free detail and craftsmanship typical of Carøe'. Typical of his churches over this period, St Bartholomew's has a wide



The exterior of St Bartholomew's.

chancel and narrow passage aisles with a generously sized nave that affords good views of the Chancel. The Lady Chapel located in the south-east corner is 'balanced' by the organ chamber to the other side. Externally, the Church is constructed of red brick trimmed with doulting stone. There is a shingled spire with pitched tiled roofs to the nave and chancel and asphalt-covered aisle roofs.

Of particular interest is the manner in which Carøe made beneficial use of the slight incline in the land by forming a 'delicate arched crypt' (Freeman) beneath the chancel. The foundation stone of St Bartholomew's is particularly interesting in so far as it was carved by the noted sculptor Eric Gill, who worked full time in Carøe's office from 1899 to 1903. The church also possesses a number of fine decorated hoppers for the disposal of the rainwater which are typical of Carøe's design of the period. I have always been interested as to who the builders were for St Bartholomew's. The church's account books for the

building fund of the St Alban's Mission, which oversaw the construction of the church, record the payment of large sums to



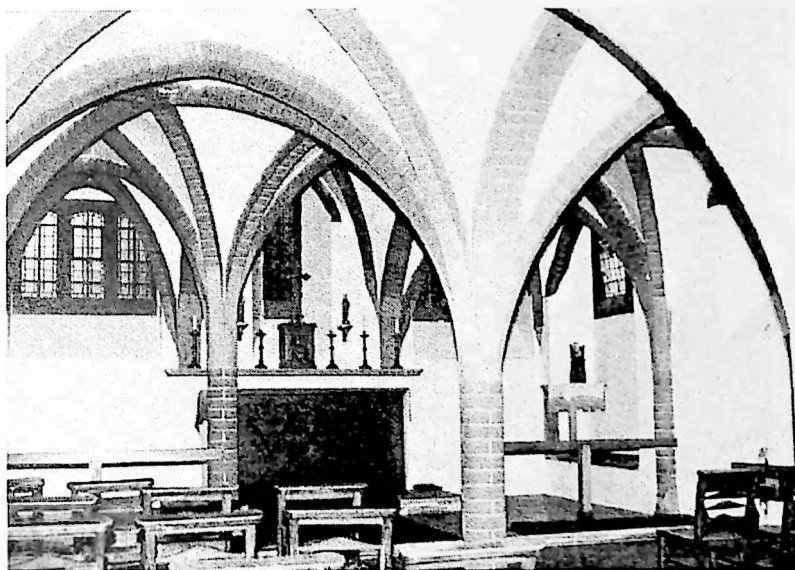
The interior of St Bartholomew's.

Messrs A. N. Pryer & Co. and to R. Corben & Co. It may well be that they were the contractors or possibly the roofers. This is uncertain.

W. D. Carøe kept working almost to the end of his life. He died in 1938. As his son said, 'right up to the end of his life he was a man of unusual energy and completely dedicated to his work'. Shortly before his death and in poor health, at the age of 80, he made complete full-sized details of an aumbry for Brecon Cathedral and posted it to the office for work to be put in hand.

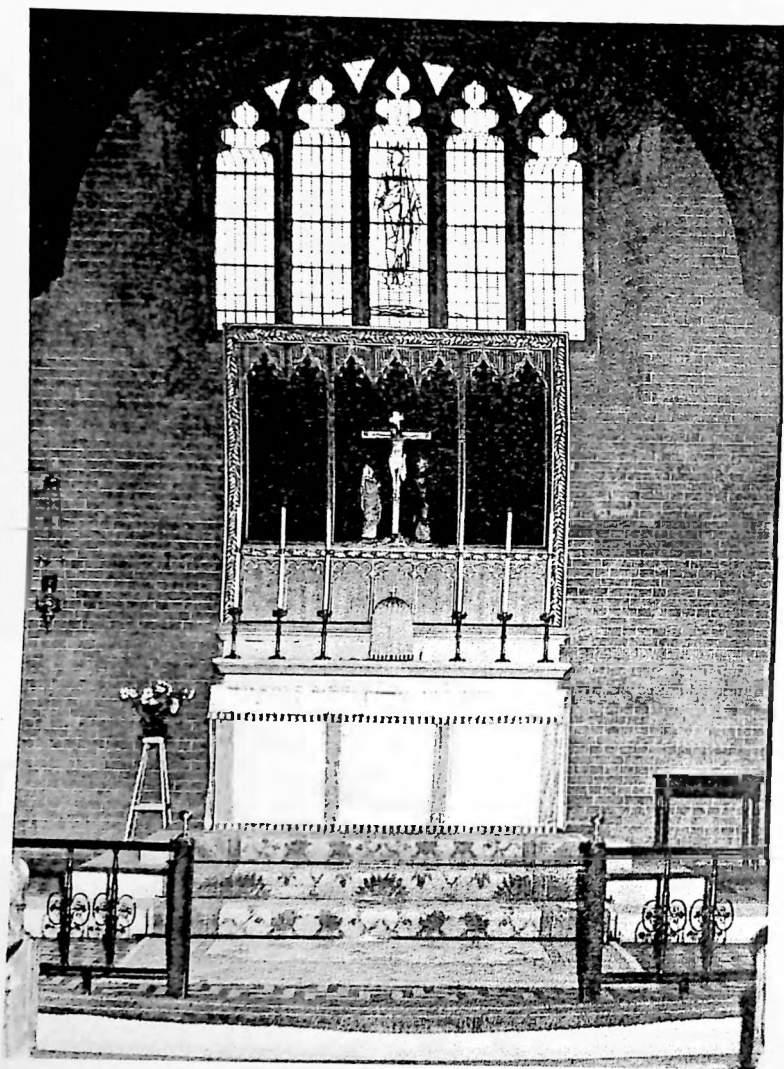
The church of St Bartholomew, Stamford Hill has reached its centenary. Is this, therefore, the end of the story? Not at all; for as we are all aware, buildings constantly need to be maintained and repaired. My late partner, Martin Carøe (grandson of W. D. Carøe), as Inspecting Architect, was instrumental in formulating a viable policy for how the church could continue to remain in good

condition. He identified areas, particularly in the brick-work, where a phased programme of repairs were necessary, as well as the need to replace the defective roof areas. He assisted the Parish in obtaining a grant from English Heritage and others, and this work was successfully completed in 2002 under my direction, Martin Caroe having died in 1999. I have recently completed my Quinquennial Inspection at St Bartholomew's and prepared a report on the condition of the church. It shows that the church building, as it enters its second century, is in a reasonable state of repair. Nonetheless, there is much work to be done. Repairs to the brickwork need to continue and the North Aisle roof needs renewing. On a different note, the needs of the disabled need to be addressed.



The crypt chapel of St Bartholomew's.

The Parish are, I believe, fortunate to have an excellent Edwardian church designed by an eminent, if somewhat less known architect. You are good custodians of the fabric, which will ensure that St Bartholomew's will continue to serve the Parish and community for the next hundred years and more.



The High Altar.

Some Memories of St Bartholomew's in the 1920s and 30s

Mrs Stella Frost

My parents were married at St Bartholomew's Church on 28 March 1914. My father's family lived nearby, and he managed to get a house to rent in Craven Park Road. They were married a week before Easter, as my father did not like a lot of show. The Curate married them; the Vicar would not conduct the wedding as they were married in Lent. My mother said that she wore a suit and went to the church in a carriage and pair—they did not have any photographs.

I was born on 19 August 1926, the youngest of the family, and was baptised in St Bartholomew's Church on 26 September 1926.

My mother had a friend who lived in Fairview Road and had three sons in the choir at St Bartholomew's: Tommy, Peter and Bobby. I can remember often seeing the choir coming out and processing along the pavement and into the church at the main door. One of my sisters loved to go across and see the weddings on a Saturday and I would often go with her.

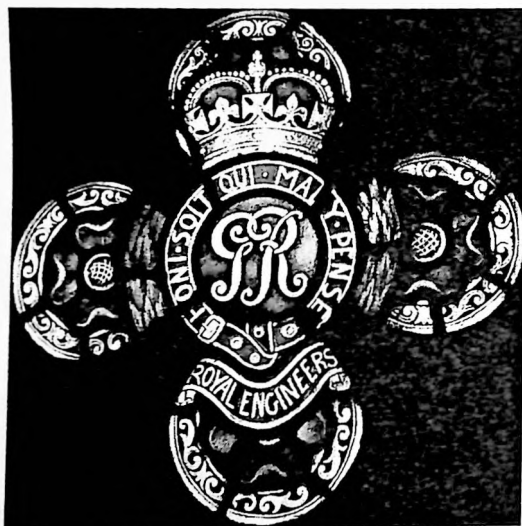
I think St Bartholomew's had a lady who used to call; I believe she was a parish worker and I think she brought the Church News or a magazine.

I went to Sunday School at Ravensdale Road Methodist Church when I was four years old. We used to go in the morning before the 11 o'clock service and meet together in a room at the back of the church, and then go into part of the main service of the church. In the afternoon we went to Sunday School again in the hall across the road and had individual classes to learn the main lessons.

Unfortunately I was evacuated with my school on 1 September 1939—two days before the outbreak of war—and never came back to live in Craven Park Road again, but have never forgotten it.

I became a Sunday School teacher myself when I was older, in the Church of England, playing the music and acting as Superintendent.

On Sunday 26 September 1982 I came back to the church on my 56th anniversary, as I wanted to be in the church I first ever went to as a baby; again I visited the church on Sunday 7 September 2003, and what a joy it was to find that there was a baptism and 'Renewal of Baptismal Vows' being held that day! I then found out that this year you would all be celebrating your centenary.



The Two World Wars

In the twentieth century the people of St Bartholomew's endured two World Wars, and the War Memorial at the west end of the church commemorates members of the parish who died, and others who served in the armed forces in the First World War. Individual memorials were also given by the families of men who had been killed. The importance of their permanent presence in a dearly loved place can be seen in a letter written to the Vicar in 1977 by Mr Roy Waters, whose brother Bernard Stanley Waters is commemorated in a plate on the north wall. He had sent donations in 1962, and again in 1977, towards church expenses, in gratitude for the care taken of his brother's monument, 'so diligently maintained by the wife of the churchwarden, Mr William Potter'. Mr Waters wrote:

My brother was a former member of the choir, was married in the church, this I well remember, to a Miss May Roper of Hillside Road, who later married again . . .

I regret that owing to age and distance I am unable to come myself. Would it be too much to ask that a single poppy could be placed over the plate. It might remind someone that one here remembers.

The Blitz

In the Annual Church Meeting of 1945, the Rev'd Noel Brown, Vicar from 1941 to 1956, described how the dramatic days of the Blitz in the summer of 1944 had affected the parish:

From June 15th almost to the end of August London was subjected to an almost continual bombardment from the first of the enemy's boasted V-weapons. It was bad enough, but we know now how we were saved from all its full fury, and we should be blind indeed if behind all the human foresight, skill and daring, we did not see the Hand of God.

Our own immediate neighbourhood must have been screened with angel's wings, even though two 'incidents' happened in our own parish. Eyewitnesses tell us that that the devilish contraption

was dead set for Crowland School, and that at the last it swerved to hide its venom. Only the Sunday before, the children had been told to help the Angels blow these horrid things onto the marshes. There is indeed much virtue in Guardian Angels and in children's prayers. Material damage was not widespread but even so a number of homes was badly damaged, some members of our own congregation being among the sufferers.



War damage in the parish: Moundfield Road on 19 July 1944.

In spite of this escape, the noise of the terror-by-night, especially as it roared over one's own rooftops, as well as the sound of explosions near and far, was far from reassuring, and it was not unnatural that there was a new evacuation. From the end of June until October the children's work was at a standstill, but it was a blessing that so many children were away when we had our second visitation on July 19th. This was a full-blooded affair, and damage was widespread.

The worst, however, never happens. There were about a dozen fatal casualties, but if it had been night instead of the afternoon, the number might have been ten times as many. Mrs Jacobs, one of our Communicants, had a miraculous escape. She is getting on in years and is almost a complete invalid. She was alone in the house, which was completely demolished. Somehow she managed

to crawl out through the wreckage with no injuries worse than bruises and cuts. We have had to part with her as she has now gone to live in the country. Unhappily she has had to endure a worse misfortune than the loss of her home, as her youngest son, Robert, a Lieutenant in the Gloucestershires, was killed in action earlier this year.



Fr Ralph Noel Brown, Vicar, 1941–56.

The loss, even if temporary, of a dozen Communicants means a great deal in a small community like ours. The 'faithful remnant' kept the flag flying, even though the siren had an obstinate habit of sounding ten minutes or so before a service. St Bartholomew's Day itself was largely ruined by the siren, one bomb screeching overhead during the Consecration of the Sung Mass, but on the Sunday in the Octave we really made a brave show. There were actually seventy-seven in Church, not counting fourteen servers and acolytes. The Procession was good to see, and someone, rejoicing jubilantly in the youth of the Bishop, said he went up to the Church like a St George. It was a most happy festival, and the Bishop was evidently very much at home.

Fr James Tute, SSC, Vicar, 1956–80

Fr David Waller

Fr Tute's long incumbency spanned a period of great change both in the universal church and in the parish. The 1960s and 70s saw the rise of much theological doubt and uncertainty and the abandonment by many of the faith delivered to the saints. Against this background, Fr Tute held fast to the Catholic faith, was faithful in prayer, devoted to the sacraments and uncompromising in his teaching. He was committed to the renewal of the Church and in particular to the work and implementation of the Second Vatican Council. In the early 1970s he introduced the revised Roman Missal and placed a Nave Altar in the church.

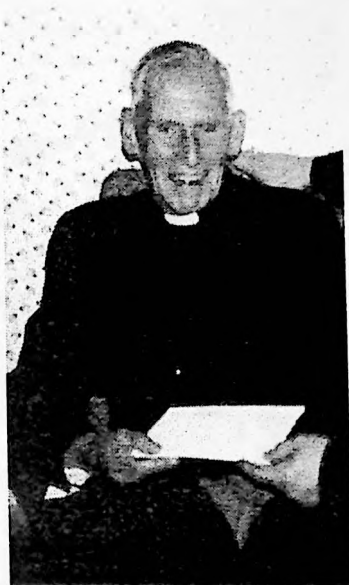
During Fr Tute's time at St Bartholomew's, the demography of the parish changed considerably. Many of the older members of the congregation died or moved away and many Hasidic Jews settled in the area. Fr Tute was keen to forge good relationships with his Jewish neighbours, but he also had to cope with the fact that this change in population necessarily meant a decline in church attendance.

The parish benefited enormously from those arriving from the Caribbean, whose faith seemed to be stronger than many of the indigenous population. Newcomers were welcomed and soon took on positions of responsibility in the church.

In the 1970s, the parish was involved in considerable pastoral reorganisation. St Peter's was closed and the parishes merged, and St John's, Vartry Road was brought within the parish boundaries. For a while the parish had two assistant priests on its staff: Fr John Seeley and Fr Brian Smith. The congregation from St Peter's brought new life to St Bartholomew's, and some of those people are still present today. Fr Seeley did excellent work with the children, preparing many for confirmation.

Fr Tute served the parish faithfully for twenty-four years, often at the expense of his own happiness. It was a difficult period, and

St Bartholomew's was not, at that time, the easiest of parishes. It has to be said that the parish did not always give its priest the support he both needed and deserved. Nevertheless, faithfulness does not go unrewarded, and it is surely the case that the subsequent growth and present orthodoxy in the parish is in no small way due to the faithfulness and prayers of those years.



Fr James Stanley Tute, Vicar, 1956–80, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, 1985.

In the late 1970s, doubt was cast on the future of the Parish. The then Bishop of Edmonton was clear in his determination to close St Bartholomew's. Fr Tute sought advice from many areas, including the Crown (as patrons of the living). The result was the transfer of the parish to the Stepney Episcopal Area.

Fr Tute's greatest gifts were certainly in his work with individuals; his skills in listening and the wisdom of his counsel were great. It is a tribute to this holy priest that so many younger clergy looked to him as a confessor and mentor.



The Lady Chapel Altar, installed by Fr James Tute.

In January 1981, Fr Tute retired to Dorset, and he returned to the parish only on one occasion, the celebration of his Golden Jubilee in 1985. He died in 1993 and was buried in his retirement village. Fr Roderick Leece and Fr David Waller were present at the funeral. At the invitation of Fr Tute's brother, some of his vestments were returned to Stamford Hill; his Chalice and the Missal presented to him by the congregation of St Bartholomew's on his fortieth anniversary of priesthood rank among Fr David Waller's most treasured possessions.

Memories of St Bartholomew's in the 1980s

Fr Michael Peet

(Priest-in-Charge, 1981–86; Vicar, 1987–89)

Was it really twenty years ago that we celebrated the eightieth anniversary of St Bartholomew's? That year we also celebrated the securing of the future of the parish, by the lifting of the 'suspension of the living' and my being made Vicar rather than just Priest-in-Charge.

Maybe the most momentous development of my time actually happened before I arrived, when the parish was transferred from the Edmonton Episcopal Area to Stepney. But there was still a worry that the church might be closed, so my 'second' induction, six years after the first, was a special joy and a tribute to all the wonderful people in the congregation who worked so hard to build things up.

I must confess that I had never really liked red brick churches from Victorian and Edwardian times. I used to think they were dull and dreary—until I saw St Bartholomew's. It was love at first sight, and I still think that it is one of the loveliest churches I know.

So it was a delight to get the chance to 'do up' the building while I was there. A few months after I had arrived a letter came, out of the blue, from the Borough, with the news that compensation terms had finally been agreed for the compulsory purchase of the St Alban's Mission Hall about seven years previously, and that the hefty cheque (including seven years' interest!) would be coming our way. Well, I'd never heard of St Alban's Hall, but I had an idea what to do with the money!

We gave the church a bit of a make-over, putting in a better platform for the nave altar, carpeting the nave, doing up the baptistery and, the biggest job of all, creating a nice kitchen, meeting room and toilet downstairs in the old vestries. I think we did a good job and enhanced an already splendid building—and in

spite of the fears of one faithful member of the congregation who wrote to the Queen with his worries, we did not sell the seventeenth-century pulpit to the Americans!



Fr Michael Peet.

There are lots of other memories, of course, from garden fêtes to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace (I suppose I was invited because the Queen is our patron!), and tea at 10 Downing Street.

It was a great joy to host the Golden Jubilee service for my predecessor Fr Tute, and to share in the life of the Upper Clapton Group of Churches.

But, of course, it is the members of the St Bartholomew's family and our life and worship together that provide the happiest memories, and if I dare mention one person, I think that the sight of a blind Matthew Wells being led gently by a tiny altar boy so that he could still be a server and still be active in our worship, sums up for me so much about the place: a church which in its building and its life declares the beauty and the love of God.



The servers.

St Bartholomew's Since 1990

Fr Roderick Leece (Vicar, 1991–)

Introduction

‘What does the Catholic Faith as received by the Church of England mean to you, and how do you commend it?’ I was stumped by this question a couple of years ago, asked in a very academic context and out of the blue. I didn’t want to respond with the obvious answer that would talk about the Church as being ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic’, as I thought this would be a reply more suited to an essay. I fumbled around and spoke inadequately about prayer and tradition, about holiness and pastoral care, and I thought to myself, had I been selling vacuum cleaners my belief in the product seemed hardly impressive. It is good for all of us to take stock and think about these larger questions. When I was an ordinand, I feel sure an answer would have sprung to mind immediately, but at the time I felt rather as a nurse might feel after nearly twenty years when asked why he or she became a nurse in the first place.

On reflection, I might talk about ‘A journey with others to fullness of Life by the way revealed in the death and resurrection of Christ’. The others on the journey are those we meet in our churches, but include also the tradition of the Church revealed in the Bible and given in the Sacraments and shown in the lives of the saints. Fullness of Life must always be more than mere fulfilment of the religious dimension of our humanity, as we are surely called to be far more than just fully, ‘religiously’ human. In an out-of-the-way, poor community, ‘on the edges’ in terms of borders and in so many other ways, we join with other Christians of the area in trying to be a real sign of hope. I believe a priority in this place is to offer the perspective of a loving God who in all probability sees more beauty and goodness and potential in us than we do in ourselves. The words of the Magnificat spring to

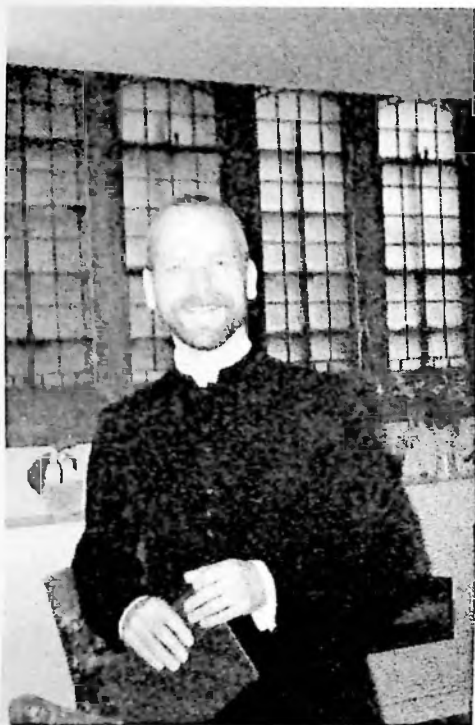
mind: 'He that is mighty hath magnified me . . . he hath exalted the humble and meek . . . and filled the hungry with good things.' People around here need to be encouraged to see that in God's eyes they are almost certainly better than they think they are. Just as in some smarter parishes, with the danger of self-satisfaction, over-confidence and maybe even pride, God's perspective is equally needed to remind them they are probably not actually as good as they might think they are. As a song about fullness of Life, the Magnificat gives us some wonderful lyrics.

Context

Fr Simon Meigh was by all accounts an energetic and talented young priest who died in very sad and tragic circumstances at Christmas 1990, having arrived in the parish early in that year. Clearly he made an immediate impression, mobilising people into teams for various tasks of renewal and mission, and had great gifts for prayer and teaching. He identified areas in need of structural change in the way the PCC was organised, and enthused and enabled many in the congregation who had arrived in Fr Michael Peet's time. Both Fr Michael and Fr Simon laid great stress on building confidence in people to develop and use their God-given gifts both liturgically and pastorally. This left a pool of numbers of people willing to volunteer and offer help and to 'have a go' in supporting many initiatives and new ideas. It was a most positive and encouraging atmosphere in which to arrive as a new parish priest, and traditionally St Bartholomew's people, though not a large congregation, have a reputation for having a high ratio of responsive and willing helpers.

The main burden of dealing with the terrible loss of Fr Simon and looking after the interregnum fell on the shoulders of Margaret Waller, who was Churchwarden with Bertis Findlay. Together with others, she had been a close ally of Fr Simon in the process of mobilising energies and talents, and she had to be strong for the sake of the parish, at no small cost to herself. She was exemplary, rooted in a strong and prayerful faith, and was gifted to cope with an immense sense of shock and bereavement.

She went on to develop these skills as she helped out at the Mildmay Mission Hospital.



Fr Simon Meigh, Vicar, 1990.

Despite the circumstances, there was a tangible sense of inheriting a community whom Fr Michael had left with a sense of being empowered for the Gospel, and with a degree of holy self-confidence. I knew the first task would be to try to bring a sense of healing and in my own mind I knew I would have to stay for a minimum of seven or eight years. It has turned out happily to be for a longer period.

The parish was part of a group of Anglican Churches in north east Hackney, and prior to my arrival, I met Fr Lamont Phillips of St Matthew's, Upper Clapton, Fr Neil Evans of St Michael's,

Stoke Newington Common, and Fr Ed Morrow of St Thomas's, Clapton.

Building

The church had been beautifully re-ordered in recent years, though the gardens had become seriously neglected, and the Vicarage grounds looked more like a mixture of a tip and a railway-siding overgrown with saplings, Russian vine and brambles. An early job was to improve the surroundings as even small indications of carelessness and decay on the outside not only give a bad impression to visitors, but are also to some extent not a bad litmus test of the care and attitude we have towards God and our faith. Visitors to the church have always commented on the cleanliness, tidiness and the general appearance inside the building of being a well-loved place with a prayerful atmosphere.

The fine doors in the porch at the entrance were fire-damaged by an arsonist in 1993 but luckily the repairs were covered by insurance. The floors were completely re-sanded and sealed in 1995 and the organ had modest repairs in the same year, and as we got used to the sparkling glow of warmer colours and a matt sheen (and the acquisition of a reconditioned grand piano) one priest joked that the church looked like an up-market ballroom! There were improvements made to the kitchen and parish room back entrance with the addition of tiled flooring. The public address system was donated and installed in 1999 and has performed well in quite a friendly acoustic.

Martin Caroe, the grandson of the original architect, looked after the building until his death in 1999, and had a tremendous fondness for the place, as well as for some of the features in the Vicarage. The unusual revolving dumb-waiter is something Martin's grandfather had also put into his house in Cyprus. Together with Patrick Crawford from Caroe & Partners (who has generously contributed to this publication) I believe that we have received excellent service and advice. It feels as though we are getting a Rolls-Royce service for a relatively small (though beautiful) Mini. Martin and Patrick steered us through an applic-

ation for an English Heritage grant, after the building was upgraded to Grade 2* listing, and we were awarded £32,000. We succeeded in matching it from our savings. In the end the first stage of repairs cost roughly £75,000, and involved the complete renewal of the flèche, repairs and renewal of high level guttering, and renewal of the asphalt to the south-west aisle roof, as well as repairs to other parts of the roofs and gutters. Most urgent now is the need to deal with the problems of severely weather-damaged bricks.

For a few years the church was featured as a building of top architectural merit in London, by being one of fifteen buildings in the London Borough of Haringey selected for the 'Open Doors' days.

Liturgy

Fr Tute had a reputation for being well up with the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, and was a well-read, holy and erudite priest who would frequently return from sojourns in Italy with new liturgical acquisitions. It is quite possible that some provisional rites were on trial in this Church of England parish even before the Roman Catholics used them. Fr Michael used the *Alternative Service Book* with a Catholic bias to worship. We continue to worship in what might be described as a 'Modern Catholic' way, using the *Celebration Hymnal* (as well as the *English Hymnal* from time to time) as a resource to mix traditional hymns with some of the more tolerable modern choruses. Evening Prayer and Benediction are celebrated on some Sundays, though many Sunday evenings are given over to supporting a 'Group Service' which rotates around the four local Anglican churches. This service provides an opportunity for more creative and imaginative worship.

There are usually four or five people who are licensed for four year periods (renewable) to administer the sacrament, and these are usually people who discreetly and impressively help the parish in practical ways as well as being faithful in their attendance of Mass.

The Church's Healing Ministry (Laying on of Hands and Anointing) is offered from time to time during the main Parish Mass, so it is seen as a central mainstream celebration with appropriate preparation and teaching. For the past two years we have introduced a 'Baptism Renewal Service' in September to invite all the baptised and their sponsors from the past decade to renew their vows and in some cases to re-establish contact with the parish community. Corpus Christi Processions of the Sacrament with scattering of flower petals around the streets take place on the Sunday after this Feast, and this year we were joined by the Bishop of Taejon, South Korea, for whom I am a Commissary.

On a musical front we have been well served by our present organist, Nicolas Bell, and also for a short time previously by John Wilson and for many years by Alex Piper who sadly died in 2002. Nicolas helps with both the youngsters' and adults' music groups, which meet on an *ad hoc* basis.

A top priority was to establish a team of servers trained as Acolytes, Crucifers and Thurifers. New white robes were ordered after a generous donation from a member of the congregation, a dozen or more people of all ages and both male and female attended a series of practices, and the team has been maintained ever since by a high proportion of the newly confirmed opting to serve. Edna Anderson and Marcel Davis, our most experienced and dedicated servers, have taken on the task of training up new blood. Joyce Osinaike has for very many years now been the Sacristan and has received help in this and in washing the church linen from June Davis in recent times.

Nurture and education

Preparation for Baptism and Confirmation is undertaken mainly by the parish priest, though with help from others as well. Lent Groups have mostly been run on an Ecumenical basis, which has meant agreeing the course material and offering different days and times of the day, so that everybody has a choice of the most convenient meeting if they are unavailable at their own church's time. 'Passover Meals' (from a Christian perspective) were part of

the tradition, but support for these annual events dwindled and more popular in recent years have been 'Demonstration Seders' led by a Rabbi and organised by the Council for Christians and Jews.

Stewardship Renewal was an area identified as an early priority, and a full scale campaign (involving themes of time and talents as well as giving) was launched in 1992. The response was heartening and generous, and there have been annual 'Renewal Updates' to keep the issues constantly before us.

Evelyn Nero, our Lay Reader since 2002, has taken a lead in initiating a Bible Study Group, which meets on Wednesday evenings and Thursday afternoons. There was a tradition of supporting the Stepney Area 'Step by Step' Adult Education Course, and we have regularly sponsored our allocation of two or three people on each course as they are arranged. Recently this has been renamed 'New Step' and takes place on an Ecumenical basis.

About half the congregation took part in a 'Faith Comes By Hearing' programme in 1999 with materials provided by the Bible Society, which involved listening to the whole of the New Testament on tape over a period of forty days.

'The Group' and the North-East Hackney Ecumenical Group

Initially the Group had a statutory council with lay and clerical representation from the four Anglican churches involved. We enjoyed Shrove Tuesday parties, annual joint confirmations and pilgrimages to places such as Canterbury, Wells and St Albans.

Following the controversies, divisions and difficulties arising from the vote in November 1992 to permit the Ordination of Women Priests there were immense strains and tensions. St Matthew's and St Bartholomew's did not believe this development to be according to the mind of God, whilst St Thomas's and St Michael's fully welcomed the vote. Many of my friends became Roman Catholics, and I seriously considered leaving the Church of England at the time. In the process of looking into the constitution of the Group it was discovered that St Bartholomew's



Fr Roderick Leece.

had never legally been incorporated (we were rather surprised by this), though we regarded ourselves as part of it on a practical

level, and amongst the most supportive of its activities. The most obvious change followed the passing of Resolutions A, B and C in 1994, after which we looked to the Bishop of Fulham for confirmations and so withdrew from that particular Group event.

However, on all other fronts, our mutual friendliness and co-operation proceeds apace, and regular Group Services are arranged, as well as Morning Prayer on Mondays, Lent Groups, the Palm Sunday Blessing of Palms, and support for the Hackney Winter Nightshelter, Missions and Social events. Some of these activities also involve friends from different denominations. There was a complete change of personnel in 1999 with the arrival of Fr Ron Farley at St Matthew's, Fr Simon Farrer at St Michael's, and the Rev'd Marjorie Brown at St Thomas's, all of whom have become good friends.

On the ecumenical front, Fr Tim Curtis SJ succeeded Fr Michael Ashworth SJ at St Ignatius's, and Fr William Pearsall SJ is presently to leave there for pastures new. The Rev'd Cathy Bird was succeeded by the Rev'd Margaret Adams at Ravensdale Road Methodist Church, while the Rev'd David Downing followed the Rev'd Lance Stone at Rectory Road United Reformed Church.

Mission

1996 and 1997 were important and fruitful years in the life of the parish. We wanted to sponsor a Mission, but having looked at the demography and religious make-up of the parish, we thought it best to widen the scope and engage in a full-scale Mission to the area covered by the seven churches of the North-East Hackney Ecumenical Group. This involved a wider and more interesting agenda as well. Launched on a Sunday at Ravensdale Road Church, and with the final service at St Ignatius's, over a period of two weeks all seven churches hosted an event. Called 'Faith Through Life' the issues covered included Inter-faith dialogue, Racism, Black Theology, Poverty, Sexuality and the 'Generation Gap'. Expert speakers such as Paul Boateng, Bishop John Sentamu, Alison Webster and Ann Morisy were invited and spoke together with someone from the local area and congregations. In

1998, a smaller event on money and debt issues was again sponsored by the North-East Hackney Churches. The idea of joint activities was continued in a Lent Ethics course in 2001.

Two days after the end of the Mission in 1996, sixty people from or associated with St Bartholomew's went on the first Parish Pilgrimage, which was to the Holy Land for ten days, together with thirty people from Fr Robert Harris's parish in Felpham and ten people who came with Fr Nicolas Spicer.

Pilgrimages

For many of our people on a low income, the pilgrimage to the Holy Land was literally 'the trip of a lifetime', and it was humbling to see how carefully and meticulously pilgrims saved up over an eighteen-month period. The preparations, prayers, hymns, preaching and services and itinerary were similarly prepared with great care by the priests involved. We spent three days up in the Galilee region and saw the traditional site for the house of St Bartholomew, visiting Capernaum, Nazareth, Tiberias, an area to remember the Sermon on the Mount, and drove up towards the Golan Heights to visit the traditional site for the Confession of St Peter. Baptismal vows were renewed in the River Jordan, and on the way to Jerusalem we stopped by at Jericho. In addition to visiting all the holy sites in Jerusalem and observing a full programme of devotions, we went to Bethlehem, and had a magical sunset last evening visit at a site (which was possibly Emmaus) for a moving celebration.

Further pilgrimages have followed at regular intervals. To a wet but inspiring Lourdes for five days in May 1997; to Rome and Assisi in 1998; to Lisbon, Fatima, Braga and Santiago di Compostela in 1999—all these attracted between fifteen and twenty-five pilgrims. A small number went to Oberammergau with Fr Robert Harris's parish in 2000. Lourdes was the destination again for a visit with much better weather in 2001, and with the added luxury of a few days relaxing in stylish Biarritz. In 2003 there was a short pilgrimage to Assisi for the Ascension, and

in this centenary year Andalucia is on the programme, with a visit to Seville, Córdoba, Ubeda and Granada.



The Parish Pilgrimage to Jerusalem, 1996.

I include a short excerpt from an article I wrote prior to our last visit to Lourdes:

Throughout the Bible there are countless famous journeys, and especially in the lifetime of Jesus there was so much travelling by him and his family and followers, not to mention wise men, people going home for a census, that it is hardly surprising that the Church herself is often referred to as the *pilgrim* people of God. And the journey of life is often seen similarly ultimately as a pilgrimage to heaven and the Promised Land. And so as Christians, we journey not just for the sake of travelling, but to discover what loving purposes our God has prepared for us. This view would see the idea of pilgrimage being one of discernment. On a personal note, I have found that it has been much easier leading pilgrimages with a lot of services and prayers and worship (like Walsingham, the Holy Land, and Lourdes) than those which have had more of a 'holiday element' included within them.

Getting to know people more intimately than is possible if we only meet them on Sundays builds a sense of confidence and mutual trust in people, so that one or two who have never said much or 'spoken out' in the past have discovered within the safety of a pilgrimage group that their voice is valued, and that perhaps they can articulate their faith better than they thought. In particular, pilgrims seemed to find the atmosphere in Lourdes so inspiring and moving that virtually everybody had something to say at the end of the day when we said Compline and shared reactions and thoughts about each day. Lourdes is, of course, a place of profound peace and healing, where what impresses many people most is how priority is given to the sick and others with physical and mental disabilities. *They* are the first-class citizens, and the place is geared primarily towards them.

Retreats

There have been a number of memorable retreats at Clewer (1993), Walsingham, a Sue Ryder Home near Henley-on-Thames (1997), the Othona Community at Bradwell-on-Sea (2002, with use of the glorious Chapel of St Cedd nearby) as well as more locally at St Edward's House in Westminster. We were joined by some of the congregation of St Michael's, Walthamstow at the Clewer Retreat, led by Fr Rodney Dreyer and following a demanding regime based on the Ignatian Exercises. Fr Robert Harris led a magical time near Henley, and the Archdeacon of Hackney, the Ven. Lyle Dennen, used the landscape and atmosphere near the East Coast to full effect on a retreat introducing the glories of Celtic Spirituality to us.

Given that some of the older members of the congregation were unable to come on retreat, we have introduced home-based 'Quiet Days' about four times a year. The Church is open, the Sacrament is exposed for Adoration, the Vicarage and garden are open and reading material is made available from the morning until four o'clock. These opportunities for prayer have been well received.

Children First

Children First is a Child Contact and Access centre run ecumenically by up to seven local churches. Along with Fr Neil Evans of St Michael's, Fr Ed Morrow of St Thomas's and Fr Michael Ashworth of St Ignatius's, we were founder members of the project in 1994 and have always played a leading role in providing volunteers and members of the Management Committee. After running for the first few years on a voluntary basis we received funding, and during my time as Chairman we recruited a wonderful Organiser and Centre Manager, Annie Elliott, who also happens to be a member of this parish. The funding base expanded to involve support from a number of charities, but chief among them have been the Probation Service, the Church Urban Fund, the Jesuits and recently, Hackney Parochial Charities.

The centre meets in the large and recently improved church hall and rooms at St Thomas's, and the offices are at St Michael's. I believe it to be the most important work we are involved in for the benefit of the non-church community, and support and energy for the important work has never flagged. Those involved can be tremendously proud of what they give to needy children and their families (up to sixty families a year).

Young Disciples

The children and youngsters gave themselves this name in the early 1990s, and the Young Disciples take an active part in helping to lead worship and presenting drama sketches and music roughly every six weeks. Notable among the adult leadership has been the help of Catherine Edwards, Christine Johnson, Pauline Davis, Jennifer Sundar, Charmaine Mowatt, and in recent years a number of new helpers.

The environment used by the Young Disciples was improved by the addition of a new carpet and notice boards in the Parish Room in 1994, and regular 'sleep-overs' prior to the Easter Vigil at dawn have proved popular. At first these were done jointly with youngsters from Ravensdale Road Methodist Church, and we

even held a joint teaching weekend and retreat at the well-equipped youth centre and chapel at Audley End.

The Hackney Deanery Summer Camps in beautiful rural Hampshire have been joined on occasion by some of our youngsters, as well as occasional outings to places such as Thorpe Park. The outdoor Stations of the Cross at Wintershall in Surrey also provided an opportunity to have a 'fun day' of pilgrimage and worship. The PCC decided to give bibles to the Young Disciples to mark the Millennium, and forty were given out last year.



The Young Disciples.

Preachers

We have usually invited visiting preachers for our Patronal Festival (Bartlemass) and preachers have included Fr Michael Gover (regularly), Fr Robert Harris (well known in the parish because of our links with his Felpham parish), Fr Jeremy Sheehy (now Principal of St Stephen's House, Oxford), Canon Neil Heavisides, Fr Roderic Ballantine, Fr Ron Farley, Fr John Seeley (former Curate), Fr David Waller (from this parish originally), Fr

Michael Ashworth SJ, Fr Philip Chester, The Ven. Michael Brotherton and The Ven. Kenneth Gibbons, in addition to the Bishops of Stepney and of Fulham.

Our full Holy Week observance in 2001 was preached by Fr Crispin Harrison, the then Superior of the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield. The Rev'd Cathy Bird of Ravensdale Road Methodist Church has preached regularly at Christmas for the Midnight Mass as her congregation joined us for the occasion from 1995 until she left for Hinde Street.

People

Matthew Wells, who had come to us after the closure of St John's, Vartry Road many years ago, sadly died in 1993. Though blind, he was well-known as a server with the Guild of the Servants of the Sanctuary, who turned out in force for his funeral. Our biggest loss in my time, though, was the death of Winnie Potter in 1999, who was a daily communicant and whose associations (and her husband's in former years) with the church and parish covered almost the whole of the twentieth century since our early beginnings. Winnie was a well-loved 'grandmother' figure, in a similar way that Margaret Waller could have been called a 'mother' figure in difficult times. There has been a succession of supportive and gifted churchwardens, and we operate a policy of encouraging them to 'hand on' to new blood after four or five years. Margaret Waller, Merlyn Pusey, Evelyn Nero and Edna Anderson have been succeeded by our present officers, Rita Morgan and June Gronland.

We welcome visiting theological students and ordinands as part of their training or development. Uwe Neumann, a German Lutheran student, was with us in the autumn of 1996 from Heidelberg University, and Yenda Smejkal spent a month on placement here in 1998 prior to his ordination after leaving Mirfield.

Social events

Early each year the events for each year are planned, and an Annual Garden Party and Summer Fête was reinstated from 1992 onwards; the weather seems always to be very favourable to us! A bouncy castle, various stalls and above all top quality West Indian food and drink is enjoyed in a relaxed manner. Regular barbecues are also held in the Vicarage garden, and the occasional Caribbean party in the Vicarage in the early 1990s. Pre-Lent Discos and Line-dancing have proved popular events to organise at a 'Group' level. Seaside trips are arranged annually, as well as smaller jaunts to places such as Cambridge and Stratford-on-Avon.

Most successful of all in terms of raising funds in recent years have been an annual series of Dinner Dances which go on until late and each raise approaching £2,000 towards church funds. Modest Harvest Suppers and Candlelit Christmas Dinners in the Crypt and Parish Room are much smaller affairs.

Regular concerts were given by the UK Caribbean Chorale in the mid 1990s, and home-grown talent has been on display as well. The Young Disciples have performed in various styles over the years, and most recently after starting a new children's choir. Given my own background as a pianist, we have also sponsored concerts with singers with myself accompanying, as well as one by a professional pianist friend, Iwan Llewellyn-Jones, who made a CD of French music in the church. Members of the congregation have also been very supportive of concerts I have given at Sutton House, a local National Trust property with a delightful concert hall and a nine-foot Steinway Grand! These have raised hundreds of pounds for the work of the Council for Christians and Jews.

The Future

The greatest treasure at St Bartholomew's is the people, whose love for the Lord and for the parish and building is demonstrable, and whose commitment to fundraising for the building is humbling and inspiring. We have recently put in a bid to English Heritage for a second phase of repairs which will cost well over £100,000, and hope soon to replace the old 'school size' chairs

Much more successful has been to have a rally of greater numbers of people for an occasional garden working party on about four mornings in a year. People seem much happier to be part of a series of 'one-off' communal efforts. And so with our ecumenical work: instead of casting round desperately to find one or two designated 'ecumaniacs' to service local institutional structures, surely it is better to have larger numbers of the congregation (in our case about a third, or roughly twenty-five people) actively involved in the various projects and initiatives we do on an ecumenical basis. Shared tasks, shared commitment, new and enduringly fertile relationships, and—I believe crucially—not flogging the good will of those most generous with their time and effort.

Why do we work and think ecumenically? I wouldn't call myself particularly ecumenically minded, because it seems such a natural, common-sense and normal way in which to think and operate. Other 'go-it-alone' mind-sets seem to me outmoded, outdated and somewhat pointless. How much more can be achieved when Christians from seven local churches from four denominations pool their person-power for the benefit of the community? The context in which we live and work would make it crazy to think or work in any other way. Our parish is in an area with a predominantly mixed Jewish community (though mostly Hasidic), with large numbers of Moslem asylum seekers moving in during the last ten years. Our church has a mostly black congregation and leadership. The biggest church in the area by far is the massive Jesuit edifice of St Ignatius, Stamford Hill, and being located in a small side street as St Bartholomew's is, it can feel very much like being the third or maybe only even the fourth largest religious community in the area. I imagine that this is a rather unusual experience for most Church of England vicars. As in many other areas of London, there is a tremendously fluid population in the East End and in North-East London. Traditionally, the Stepney Area of the Diocese of London has attracted talented Bishops with a strong commitment to the Social Gospel—and with a radical bent (Huddleston and Sentamu, to name just two).

I rather enjoy the experience of being literally on the edge of the Diocese and of two boroughs—Hackney and Haringey—in a back street too, with Christians as a minority community. In this context I believe it would be ridiculous not to search for partners with whom to work together. My own description of the area, and of our relation to the wider Church, is to call it a sort of Nazareth: on the edges, at the boundaries, a poor area, out of the way. Anyone who has been to the Holy Land will know what I mean when comparing a place like Nazareth—dusty and unremarkable, in the middle of nowhere—with the stunning lakeside setting of Capernaum. That is where all the wealthy Roman officials would have had their cooler weekend houses, as it were. Perhaps it is easier for ecumenical endeavour to flourish in our needy Nazareth than in the more swept-up heart of things. I think it sad that many clergy in central London have to spend so much time merely chaplaining the inherited traditions and leading edges of their beacon-status shrines. And this ‘putting on a good show for the firm’ applies across the denominations. Of course there are clearly many wonderful ecumenical services, prayer groups and joint acts of witness at churches in central London; but my impression is that so much more working together could be achieved, and yet for many places ecumenical co-operation is an ‘add-on’ rather than the basic default mind-set.

How things got going in our part of North-East London has very much to do with the Social Gospel, in both senses of the word. Clergy from the four Anglican churches, St Ignatius Roman Catholic Church, the United Reformed Church and the Ravensdale Road Methodist Church came together in the early 1990s for what used to be called clergy fraternals, and now are called fellowships. The scope of our activity at the time was typical of most similar meetings throughout the country—organising the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity events, forums during elections, representation at police liaison meetings, Holy Week ecumenical services, and the like. Of immense help for the cohesion of the group were the pre-existing links and co-operation between the Anglican churches involved. But, as I said at the beginning, it was quite a blessing not to be encumbered

with structures inherited from the past, and I believe all moribund local ecumenical structures should be allowed a quiet and dignified death. The meetings in North-East Hackney are a free association of the open and willing, and always have been. But it is also a group with churches of very different sizes, and it has been a blessing to be able to offer many of the programmes offered by the large resources of St Ignatius to all local Christian people whose churches have much smaller facilities and capacities, and to do so in concert.

Most important, though, when thinking about how the scope of what we now do quickly expanded way beyond the norm, are the personal links between the clergy, and also between the lay people. This will be no surprise. Having been where I am for twelve years, I have seen a complete change of personnel, but when new clergy arrive it soon becomes clear that what we do together is 'where it is at' (as they say) in the area, and relations today are as good and enduring as ever they have been. We like and, I believe, respect each other immensely.

At one meeting in my vicarage I was embarrassed to see rather a fine and large collection of alcohol on display on the sideboard in the dining room where the meeting was taking place. It was swollen well beyond its normal capacity, as a friend of mine (a former Anglican but now a Catholic parish priest) had only recently left to test a monastic vocation and had to relinquish all manner of exotic goodies. Half way through the meeting I thought I had better offer some of the drink around, and I asked (as might be done in any vicarage) whether anybody would like a sherry before lunch. Within seconds, and this was her first meeting, the Methodist minister asked if I had a G&T (again, it is hardly the last secret of Fatima that Catholic Anglican vicarages are likely repositories). After this encounter through genuine, relational ecumenism, you will hardly be surprised that she is now one of my best friends.

What actually goes on, thanks to our relational ecumenism? I begin with the sorts of things which would be typical of many local ecumenical churches throughout the country. Police Liaison meetings with the clergy are now inter-faith as well. Lent Groups

are arranged in a network of times and places and advertised throughout our churches, and people go to the most convenient in terms of when and where, regardless of which denomination is hosting it—for example, Wednesday mornings (Methodist) might suit better than Thursday evenings (Anglican). On Palm Sunday, a joint procession of palms takes place from a central point, and some churches also have a joint Good Friday open air service or march of witness. Individually guided retreats are run from St Ignatius but with ecumenical input, and are available to people in all congregations. During the Iraq war, all seven churches have been open at noon on Saturdays for Prayers for Peace.

Less typical activities, and yet the most important for us, include 'Children First', the Child Contact and Access Centre, for which we have over thirty volunteers and a funded organiser, with clergy and people from all seven churches on the Management Committee. It has never lacked energy and is our core project meeting a real need. The Hackney Winter Nightshelter used to be based in the Methodist Church Hall and is now hosted by the URC, but many volunteers come from St Bartholomew's and St Ignatius's. As well as the two-week mission 'Faith Through Life' held a few years ago, there have more recently been smaller mission events on money matters and debt issues. And finally there is the 'New Step' course, for which each church chooses two or three key lay members to go on a six month course, in which local clergy provide a large proportion of the teaching input. It is run ecumenically and is suitable for building confidence in the newly confirmed, or renewal for those more mature in the faith who might be taking on more responsibility in the parish.

Sharing a basic ecumenical mind-set has proved so valuable too in our relations with other faith communities. Three of the local clergy are on the executive committee of the Council for Christians and Jews for East London, and our clergy meetings have expanded so that every other gathering is now an Inter-faith meeting with Moslem, Jewish and Hindu representation. A real breakthrough late last year was an Inter-faith open air service of prayers for peace on Stoke Newington Common, a significant moment bringing many dozens of key leaders and those actively

involved in their own faith communities together. In the near future we are to host a special meeting of local Christian and Moslem leaders to be visited by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Working Group on Christian-Moslem relations.

The ecumenical initiative we are most proud of, I think, is the 'Children First' project, and I thank God that we pour in our resources jointly and do so in what might be described as a disinterested way. That is to say that the benefits are reaped by others; no one of us owns the project individually (with all the attendant danger of proprietorial pride), yet it is something we can be proud of together. Shared ownership, shared effort, shared endeavour make so many more things so much more possible than going it alone.

Priests, Lay Readers and Mission Workers of St Bartholomew's, Stamford Hill

List of Incumbents

The Rev'd J. W. Goddard: Mission Priest, 1897–99; in charge of the Mission Church, 1899–1904; Vicar of St Bartholomew's, 1904–21.

The Rev'd W. H. Tozer, 1921–24.

The Rev'd W. H. Pollock-Hill, 1925–41.

The Rev'd R. N. Brown, 1941–56.

The Rev'd J. S. Tute, 1956–80.

The Rev'd J. M. Peet: Priest-in-Charge, 1981–86; Vicar, 1987–89.

The Rev'd S. J. Meigh, 1990.

The Rev'd R. N. S. Leece, 1991– .

Assistant Priests

The Rev'd L. R. Moore, 1901–05.

The Rev'd R. H. Cragg, 1906–?

The Rev'd F. Lamplugh, 1920–21.

The Rev'd J. W. Davis, 1921–23.

The Rev'd D. C. Hoey, 1924–25.

The Rev'd E. E. de L. Mann, 1925–26.

The Rev'd D. A. G. Muir, 1926–28.

The Rev'd A. J. Short, 1930–32.

The Rev'd H. Treble, 1932–34.

The Rev'd R. C. Silk, 1970–?

The Rev'd J. F. Sceley, 1974–80.

The Rev'd B. M. Smith, 1975–84.

Lay Readers

Mr J. R. Brown, 1899–1904.

Mr W. E. Spencer, 1904–?

Mrs E. Nero, 2002– .

Mission Workers, etc.

Sister Maud, 1901–02.

Mrs Griffiths

Miss Hewitt

Miss B. N. Morley-Pearce, 1969–?